



US Army Corps
of Engineers®

USACE works to comply with Strategic Sourcing initiatives

Maj. Gen. Griffin offers insight into process, plans

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Headquarters

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is working to comply with the President's Management Agenda, and the Army's Third Wave competitive sourcing initiative.

"There are three important things to keep in mind," said Maj. Gen. Robert Griffin, Director of Civil Works. Griffin heads the Corps' competitive sourcing task force. "First, the most important is that our employees will be kept informed, and their rights and entitlements will be protected every step of the way.

"The second is that this is not just a Corps thing, or even just an Army thing," said Griffin. "It's government-wide. If there weren't a 'Third Wave' there would still be the competitive sourcing part of the President's Management Agenda.

"And the third thing to remember is that the jobs are being competed, not automatically outsourced," Griffin added.

The President's Management Agenda requires all federal agencies to streamline and become more effective. "Competitive sourcing" means

that all federal agencies are reviewing their tasks to determine if a given task is something that must be done by the federal government, like war-fighting, or if it could be done by a civilian contractor and would be competed. The "Third Wave" is the Department of Defense's effort to comply with the President's Management Agenda.

Past time

"Some will argue that competitive sourcing is neither more economical nor more efficient," said Griffin. "But the time for argument is over, since the President has made his decision. Now it's up to our leadership to steer the Corps toward compliance while retaining the core capabilities of this great organization.

"Further, we submitted a competitive sourcing proposal to OMB in our FY04 budget that we believe meets the intent of the competitive sourcing objectives while ensuring that we retain our organizational competencies," said Griffin. "We now must begin to execute our plan."

Planning

In early March, there was an implementation planning session with the Corps' major subordinate commands (MSCs). During the session, the MSCs and the Headquarters Strategic Sourcing Program Management Team looked at the tasks and assignments, and made recommendations regarding the scope and timing of the Corps' direct-to-contract actions and the competitive sourcing studies.

The Strategic Sourcing Program team met with functional representatives and subject experts to work out details. An implementation plan is required for each study and report, but details of the plans cannot be released until congressional and workforce announcements take place.

Deadlines

Time is growing short for implementation.

"OMB expects us to show progress on meeting the administration's

requirement to compete positions under the President's Management Agenda," said Griffin. "The Third Wave requires us to present implementation plans to the Army leadership in the June-July time-frame. The initial plans will soon be presented to the Chief of Engineers for approval, and we will begin implementation shortly thereafter. Whatever differences occur from the Third Wave process will be incorporated into our original plan already submitted to OMB."

Exemptions?

Some people wonder if the Corps could be exempted from the President's Management Agenda and the Third Wave. Several things have happened...

Exemption requests. The Corps filed four exemption requests with the Army.

"The Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs (ASA(M&RA)) determined that some work in some functions in several Corps mission areas are inherently governmental," said Griffin. "We sought determinations for many more areas than the assistant secretary approved. The ASA(M&RA) also made certain decisions for positions Army-wide, for example legal or contracting. These Army-wide decisions will also apply to our positions in the Corps.

"I think it's important for our employees to know that the Acting Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works and I were directly involved in these decisions," said Griffin. "The determinations issued by the ASA(M&RA) will be reflected in USACE's next FAIR Act (Federal Activities Inventory Reform) inventory annual update coming out later this year."

Third Wave exemption. The Corps sought an exemption from the Third Wave, but the request was denied. However, the Army is allowing the Corps to structure its Third Wave Plan based on retaining certain USACE core competencies that were previously not recognized under more specific war-fighting skills.

Omnibus Bill. Section 109 of the 2003 Omnibus Funding Bill says, "None of the funds appropriated herein or hereafter in this Act, or in any other Act, shall be used to study or implement any plans

privatizing, divesting, or transferring any Civil Works missions, functions, or responsibilities for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to other government agencies without specific directions in a subsequent Act of Congress."

"The Deputy General Counsel of the Army (Civil Works & Environment) says the statute precludes moving an entire civil works mission, function, or responsibility from the Army to the private sector," said Griffin. "But it does not prevent the Army from transferring certain tasks or assignments to the private sector, provided the Army retains control and oversight of them."

Kept informed

Regardless of what happens, the Corps' team members will be kept fully informed about this subject.

"By law, by regulation, and under our role as caring leaders there are certain requirements we must comply with to keep affected employees informed," Griffin said. "As we proceed, affected employees will see more communication from the Corps' leadership about the specific plan, phasing, and their rights under law and policy."

To keep the Corps team informed, there is the "Competitive Sourcing Information Page" on the Corps Headquarters website at www.hq.usace.army.mil. It is the single best and most accessible source of information on the subject.

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